

4. A Survey Study of the books of Chronicles ("God's People")

a. An overview:

Jewish tradition says that Ezra wrote Chronicles as well as Ezra and Nehemiah. This traditional view was virtually unchallenged until the last century when some critics said it must have been written much later (some said as late as 180 BC) because of the genealogies. 1 Chronicles 3:19-24 appears to list six generations after Zerubbabel, the high priest who served in 520 BC. Six generations of thirty to forty years each would bring the date of composition down to 340-280 BC, long after Ezra's time. This question of date and authorship is important because if the author wrote long after the events themselves his history could be discounted as inaccurate or invented.

In favor of Ezra's authorship are the close ties linguistically and stylistically between the first-person ("I") sections of Ezra and the books of Chronicles. The strong Jewish tradition already mentioned also agrees with this viewpoint. It seems likely that Ezra wrote Chronicles near the end of the fifth century BC. Even though this is the generally accepted view of scholarship today, it is traditional to refer to the author of Chronicles as the Chronicler, which honors the anonymity of the books.

Another question deals with the Chronicler's use of sources, both canonical and non-canonical. The main base for most of Chronicles is obviously 1 Samuel 31--2 Kings 25, but he makes reference some twenty times to other sources (as in 1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29, 16:11, etc.). He used what may have been a single work which he called by various titles: "The Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah" (2 Chronicles 27:7), "The acts of the Kings of Israel" (2 Chronicles 33:18), etc. This was probably either an official record or annals of the kingdom or a history based on such annals (see our earlier notes on Kings). He used the writings of various prophets from the time of David (Samuel, Nathan, and Gad) and Solomon (Nathan, Ahijah, and Iddo), apparently by incorporating divine assessments of the various kings as recorded by those prophets. He also must have had access to temple records, genealogies, and official lists in order to draw up the detailed lists describing those aspects of life in Israel.

Chronicles contains many genealogies (1 Chron. 1-9), prose narratives, some poetry (1 Chronicles 12:18; 16:8-36, etc.), and official lists and records (1 Chron. 23:7-23; chapters 24-27).

An Outline for Chronicles is thus:

- I. Genealogies 1 Chronicles 1-9
- II. David 1 Chronicles 10-29
- III. Solomon II Chronicles 1-9
- IV. Kings of Judah II Chronicles 10-36

More precise analysis makes these divisions:

- I. Genealogies 1 Chronicles 1-9
- II. Death of Saul 1 Chronicles 10
- III. David 1 Chronicles 11-29
- IV. Solomon II Chronicles 1-9
- V. Division of the Kingdom 2 Chronicles 10-12
- VI. Kings of Judah 2 Chronicles 13-35
- VII. Exile and Hope 2 Chronicles 36

You will see others in our text, etc., and you will also observe symmetry in those given above, with a little added effort.